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Faculty Forum Minutes

21 November 2005

Derek Mason, Faculty Senate President conducted the meeting.

Items discussed at the Faculty Forum are as follows:

Stabilizing Enrollment and Revenue

President Albrecht noted that the forum was being broadcast over the internet to allow all faculty to participate. He noted that our most important challenge is stabilizing enrollment and revenues. Until this occurs, the university's other goals cannot be achieved. Enrollment is system-wide issue. Utah State University is working very aggressively with the legislature to ameliorate some of the problems created by House Bill 331. A bill will pass through the both the Utah Senate and House to provide out-of-state tuition waivers for students in surrounding states. The Rhodes Scholar Trip to Idaho was a success, and will be taken to some of the larger high schools along the Wasatch Front.

Budget

Glenn Ford, Vice President for Business and Finance, presented the budget. Utah State University has an \$8.6 million structural operating deficit. Structural means a problem that will reoccur unless addressed. This problem has accrued from FY02 to FY06; \$4.6 million is a cumulative deficit which has accumulated over the past several years, and a projected \$4 million is due to a drop of enrollment from FY05 and FY06. After calculating the adjusted base, auxiliary unit funds, F & A funds, and a branch campus institutional support fees will be used to reduce the deficit. After these funds are applied, there is a 3.85% budget shortfall. Remedies would be to adjust the budget base by increasing the amount of tier-two tuition, continue to use one-time and on-going budget reductions, and develop a system-wide holistic approach that would allow any growth in the Utah State University then the entire system would benefit from the growth.

Concurrent Enrollment

Concurrent Enrollment (i.e., students obtaining college credit for high school classes) presents the UHES serious challenges. Concurrent enrollment occurs in two ways at USU: USU-Uintah Basin instructors teach concurrent enrollment, a practice developed at a time when the University received access funds. These access funds covered the costs of offering the courses, but access funding was eliminated. It is not financially feasible for the Universities to continue with this system. Concurrent enrollment is provided through high schools, but receives no state support. Either way, funding from the state does not cover costs.

Enrollment Management

Joyce Kinkad, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies and Research, presented enrollment data for new undergraduate students which are freshman and transfer students. These typically total about 3,000 students out of a total enrollment of 23,000. Day-fifteen of the semester is the day enrollment data are collected. The reasons for a downturn in enrollment are as follows: 1) There is a smaller group of graduating high school students, and the competition for students has

increased. 2) House Bill 331 led to a decrease in students enrolling from Idaho and Wyoming. 3) Ricks College was an important “feeder school,” but their move to a four-year institution university has reduced enrollments at USU. 4) Other institutions in the state have expanded their offerings. 5) The newspaper story of a 43% tuition increase over 3 years was aimed at our legislatures to help get increased funding for Utah State University, but that story may have created misperceptions about the costs of going to USU. 6) There are decreased college-going rates around the state. In order to increase enrollments, Public Relations and Marketing have developed more consistent marketing messages. The enrollment goal is 2,600 freshmen; to obtain this, we must start with an 80,000-90,000 pool of names. Utah State University buys ACT lists, and this year will invest \$10,000 in SAT lists to do more targeted and national searches. The Idaho Rhodes Scholar Road trip helped raise awareness of USU’s appeal. Initial student inquiries will get a minimum of two dozen communications. The legislative bill for out-of-state tuition waivers will hopefully pass this year. Once a student is here and recruited, we must retain them. A retained student is a cost effective student. Freshman to sophomore retention is 10% higher, while second to third year is 10% lower. The challenges for enrollment management are as follows: 1) Next year, Utah State University will have to reduce the number of tuition waivers by 40%, at the undergraduate level, excluding athletics, to stay within budget. This will have an affect on quality and quantity of new students. 2) Lack of holistic management. We need a broader view of the whole system of Utah State University. 3) Limitations in Institutional Research make it difficult to about accurate data on this issue. 4) The demographics of Utah’s high school population are changing; the greatest increase is in the Hispanic population which had not traditionally enrolled in large numbers in universities. Utah State University must get out into the schools from K-12 to ensure that these students have access and can be successful at a research university. Vice President Franco has a grant that is working on exactly this project.

Question: How do Undergraduate students differ to Graduate students? Graduate students are not a revenue stream, unless they are full paying students, but for the most part tuition is waved.

Academic Rights and Responsibilities

Lynn Dudley, chair of Academic Rights and Responsibilities Committee, presented an initial draft of changes and additions to the policy. He is seeking input from faculty across campus. Question: What have we been doing? The Academic Rights and Responsibility Committee is an ad-hoc committee of the Faculty Senate authorized by the President to review Utah State University’s policies and code related to the academic rights of faculty and students. The need for this was made necessary by efforts of some groups and legislators to gain control of course content in higher education. We are trying to establish policy to protect us from legal challenges and to inoculate ourselves to interference from external groups. Meetings of the committee included meetings with an individual in the Utah Attorney General’s office who was involved in the University of Utah lawsuit, the chair of the University of Utah’s Accommodations Policy Committee and a professor of law at University of Utah. The Tenth Circuit Court heard the Axson-Flynn case and affirmed the right of the institution and faculty to control course content as long as the course content is related to a legitimate, pedagogical goal. It also ruled that if a state institution has a system of individualized exemptions, then the state may not refuse to extend the system to cases of religious of religious hardship without a compelling reason. Question: What does that mean? USU has an excused absence policy, but must now include religious considerations in this policy. The committee recommends the following changes to the

code 1) insert a statement recommending disclosure of course content in the syllabus, 2) insertion of a statement of values and rights with the definition of academic freedom in section 403.1, and 3) adoption of a policy describing the procedures and conditions for providing alternative course requirement.

Question: Who decides what a legitimate pedagogical goal is? If we had no policy, the court would ultimately decide the policy. With a policy, there will be pre-existing guidelines and the court would support the university. Thus, a policy will reduce the risk of liability.

Library Funding

Lisa Bureau presented the topic of library funding. The library is central to our academic mission. It is important to research at the graduate and undergraduate level, and to the retention of faculty and students. The library is severely under funded compared to peer institutions, and is well below other research I institutions. Journal costs are rapidly increasing, and the library is no longer able to add journals and electronic access. Instead, they have to cancel subscriptions just to maintain what we have. It takes about \$200,000 just to keep up with rate increases.

Question: How does this impact us? We are building research infrastructure on this campus in new and growing areas, for example, bio-informatics. They did not get the journals they needed to do their research. So we are investing hundreds of thousands of dollars in startup packages for new science faculty, and we do not even have the journals on campus to support them, nor can we obtain them without reductions elsewhere. Our library needs to have a strong commitment to increasing funding in order to allow us to proceed as a research institution. Right now funding is stagnant.

The forum adjourned at 4:40 pm.

The meeting was attended by 71 individuals, 26 electronically by internet, and others viewing on a satellite channel through extension technology.